

Big Train concentrates on building a big community

Published on: Thursday, June 17, 2010

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<http://www.thesentinel.com/mont/Big-Train-community>

This is not just about baseball; this is about building a stronger community, says the Bethesda Big Train's founder, Bruce Adams.

The Big Train is a summer collegiate amateur baseball team made up of locally and nationally recruited players. It is owned and operated by the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club (BCBBC), a nonprofit organization focused on improving field conditions for youth baseball teams in the Maryland-D.C. area.

"We're a nonprofit organization ourselves, and we have donated more than \$500,000 to our mission of building youth baseball fields in D.C. and Montgomery County," said Jordan Henry, general manager of the Big Train. The BCBBC president, board of directors and most of the people involved are volunteers.

The Big Train plays its home games at The Shirley Povich Field, located in Cabin John, Md. The field was built in December 1998 with the \$1 million in contributions raised by the BCBBC, with the assistance of the Montgomery County Parks Foundation, a division of the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission.

As for the team itself, the Big Train first commenced play in 1999 and has since claimed three league championships, as well as two post-season championships in Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League.

"In 2009, we had our most successful season ever, going 34-10 and winning the Cal Ripkin Collegiate Baseball League Championship series," Henry said. "Led by longtime team manager Sal Colangelo, the Big Train finished the season ranked the No. 9 summer collegiate team in the nation."

Rankings are tracked by Perfect Game Crosschecker, an amateur-baseball scouting service.

Featuring little league organizations, game sponsors and entertainment at each home game, the Big Train has attracted a growing fan base.

"Last season, we set our attendance record by averaging a sell-out crowd of 765 fans each game," Henry said.

Attendance wasn't the only record broken by the Big Train last season.

"Our hitters set multiple team and league records," Henry said. The Bethesda Big Train returns this summer without six players from last season, all of whom were picked up in the 2010 MLB draft.

Proceeds from the Big Train, in addition to donations and fundraising events, are used to improve softball and little league baseball fields at schools and in area parks.

"We are building a community every night at Povich Field," Henry said.